

## **MINUTES**

### **NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION**

**December 10, 2015  
Lansing Center  
333 E. Michigan Avenue, Lansing, MI 48933**

#### **Present for the Natural Resources Commission**

John Matonich, chair  
J.R. Richardson, vice-chair  
Vicki Pontz  
Rex Schlaybaugh  
Christine Crumbaugh  
Louise Klarr  
Tim Nichols

#### **Present for DNR staff**

Keith Creagh, DNR director  
Bill Moritz, DNR natural resources deputy  
Marc Miller, DNR regional initiatives deputy  
Peter Manning, legal counsel, Office of the Attorney General  
Dennis Knapp, DNR chief of staff  
Cheryl Nelson, executive assistant to the NRC

### **COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE**

**Chairman John Matonich** called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 2:39 p.m.

**NASP World Champion Team – Hartland High School** **Kathy Garland** from the Marketing and Outreach division shared the accomplishments of the team along with providing some information on the National Archery in the Schools Program. Each member was presented with a certificate of appreciation from the department and the commission.

**License Sales Overview** **Jody Simoes**, also from the Marketing and Outreach division presented a report on license and permits sales. Total fishing customers are up 2%, hunting customers are down 2%, Parks overall sales for recreation passport, lodging, harbor, etc., are up. **Simoes** talked about trends in hunting and our efforts to understand those trends. Hunting license sales have followed national trends in declining over the past few decades.

**Suppressors** Law Enforcement division's **Lt. Tom Wanless** runs the Recreational Safety section. He shared information on suppressors including the definition of a silencer. Suppressors reduce gun noise, although they do not completely silence the sound of shots. Advocates argue that suppressors can reduce hearing loss for hunters. Michigan is one of about 40 states that allow citizens to possess suppressors, provided they comply with applicable federal law. Five of those states, including Michigan, don't allow the use of

suppressors for hunting. The Law Enforcement Division thinks that prohibition could be lifted, provided suppressors don't reduce gun noise more than 30 decibels. They were thanked by the commission for their effort in this report. There will be an order for information next month as requested by the chairman. **Creagh** suggests that they supply rationale for recommendation.

**Blue Ribbon Advisory Group Update** Regional Initiatives deputy **Marc Miller** presented to the commission information regarding the meeting on November 5. Breakout groups tackled two items at this meeting; how would they like to define success at a state game area, and what are the possible uses they could imagine at a state game area. The next meeting will be on January 13 at the Demmer Center on the MSU campus. The chairman stated that he thinks the group is doing a marvelous job and is looking forward to the results of this group.

**Grand River Water Trails Update** **Marc Miller** also updated the commission on efforts to create a water trail on the Grand River which stretches 252 miles and is the longest river in Michigan. The hope, through community discussions, is to create a water trail designation along the length of the river and the group is hoping to carry this out in the next several months. The group aims to develop and negotiate partnership agreements, so that that partners can get their trail responsibilities. They are looking to have this completed sometime in the spring. The director thanked **Miller** for his involvement and dedication.

**Inventing the Outdoors-Webster Marble's World** Michigan Historical Center director **Sandra Clark** along with guest **Dennis Pace** gave a presentation on the Inventing the Outdoors exhibit. The exhibit tells the story of Webster Marble, who established a business in the Upper Peninsula (UP) community of Gladstone to manufacture outdoor equipment for campers, hunters, anglers and hikers. Marble started the company in the late 19th century just as a rapidly urbanizing America began to view the outdoors as a place for recreation and rejuvenation. **Pace** hopes that all will visit the exhibit; it's a wonderful story about the Upper Peninsula (UP), the state, and natural resources.

**Natural Resources Trust Fund Grant Update** **Steve DeBrabander** of Finance and Operations division provided an update on the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund grants; a program that has been going on for almost 40 years. This year, there were 149 applications received asking for over \$50 million, from local units of government and the DNR, 32 for acquisition for \$28.1 million, of which 26 were local governments, and six were DNR. On the development side, there were 117 applications, 110 from local units of government, seven from DNR. The total request was for \$22 million. The staff scored applications, ultimately giving the board a list in priority order. They recommended \$27.9 million for a total of 70 different projects. On the acquisition side; \$19.9 million for 26 acquisitions; 21 local units of government, five for DNR projects. Highlights include the acquisition of 80 acres in Houghton County for Douglas-Houghton waterfall, a long term project to develop with the local unit of government, which is currently a safety issue; a project on the Grand River in Grand Rapids, two projects on Lake St. Clair to allow for improved boating access. On the development side there are 44 projects for \$8 million, 39 local units of government, five were DNR projects. Highlights include boat launch improvements in Frankenmuth, Ann Arbor park improvements, and seven Iron Belle projects developing over 22 miles of that trail. A list of all approved projects may be found on the DNR website. Now they move to the legislative appropriations process through a series of meetings and hearings, then they move on to **Governor Snyder** for his signature. The chairman thanked

**DeBrabander** for working with the local units of government, noting that the results are amazing. **Creagh** agrees that **DeBrabander** and his staff make the board's job seem quite seamless.

**Hunter Education Instructor of the Year – Timothy Pifher** **Gary Hagler**, chief of the Law Enforcement division presented the 2015 Hunter Education Instructor of the Year Award to **Mr. Timothy Pifher** of Davison. **Mr. Pifher** has been a certified hunter education instructor since 1997, teaching over 3,600 students. He has also been an advocate for hunting legislation related to mobility laws. In addition to the Hunter Education Instructor of the Year award, **Mr. Pifher** received recognition from the offices of Representatives Smiley and Faris.

**Legislative Report Trevor VanDyke**, Legislative and Legal Affairs Office Director, provided a written report of legislation related to the department. In addition to the written report, **VanDyke** provided updates on recent legislative highlights.

### **Committee Reports**

**NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries:** Commissioner **Rex Schlaybaugh** noted that the committee received excellent reports including a fisheries report on impact on climate change and also received an update on chumming issues which are effecting some areas on the west side of the state. Wildlife shared the preliminary 2015 firearm deer season report and a report on chronic wasting disease (CWD), noting that the division has done a good job dealing with this situation. **Schlaybaugh** adds that the department has followed an aggressive approach in dealing with CWD and the hunting community will be well-served.

**Partners in Conservation Award** The Partners in Conservation Award was presented to **Mr. Jack Stockbridge** of Waterford, who was instrumental in designing, testing and constructing noise abatement structures at the Pontiac Lake shooting range.

**Thomas L. Washington Lifetime Conservation Award** **Mr. Ron Lundberg** was chosen as this year's selection as the recipient of the Thomas L. Washington Lifetime Conservation Award. He was chosen for his commitment to conservation and outdoor recreation. He is a strong believer in the mission of the department, which was quite evident in his efforts to pass Proposal G in 1996. He continued to promote conservation by hosting a syndicated outdoor radio show for several years and was instrumental in organizing the sporting community in the UP by establishing the Northwoods Chapter of Safari Club International. **Lundberg** has always had a special spot in his heart for youth, but especially youth with disabilities and has worked extensively to provide opportunities through camps and special hunts for disabled persons.

### **Public Appearances Before the NRC**

(**Stacy Welling Haughey** read the official timekeeping procedures and guidelines for the meeting's public appearances which began at 4:27 p.m.)

**Steven Kuieck** of RiverQuest Charters came before the commission to discuss his position on chumming. He provided an update on the fall fishing noting that there was no major improvement on steelhead and salmon fishing. RiverQuest Charters are against chumming. In

response to the discussion today, he stated that a proactive approach provided by a single management unit would help the Muskegon River immensely. His challenge to commission is to end chumming now.

**Knox Williams**, American Suppressors Foundation, testified to the commission on behalf of the foundation stating that suppressors mitigate the sound of the shot, but do not silence it. He went on to say the use of suppressors for hunting, when hunters cannot wear ear protection because they need to be aware of their surroundings, can help against hearing loss. **Williams** also told the commission that if they were interested, the foundation would host a suppressor demonstration.

**Kyle Rorah** from the Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation came to voice support on behalf of the foundation for legalizing the use of firearm suppressors while hunting in the state. He discussed the positive benefits of suppressors including hearing protection, reduced recoil and muzzle rise resulting in increased shooter confidence, allowing for more consistent and accurate shots. Suppressors are already used in 37 other states.

**Dakota Moore** from the National Rifle Association (NRA), testified to the commission about the use of suppressors for hunting. Since 2011, the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action has joined with various wildlife and manufacturer stakeholder organizations to successfully advocate on behalf of the use of suppressors. He hopes to see the use of suppressors for hunting become allowed in the state of Michigan.

**Robert (Mark) O'Donnell** representing Gemtech shared comments with the commission about the use of suppressors for hunting. He stated that many people buy suppressors for hearing safety. The suppressor doesn't make the gun silent, it is just a muffler. He believes they make a person shoot more accurately. He added that from a law enforcement standpoint, they are not an issue. He discussed the vetting process for purchase of a suppressor.

**Chauncey Moran** presented information to the commission regarding land use issues in the UP concerning the leasing program. His concern is where they don't want to have a lease and there weren't enough restrictions. The department has come up with an expansion of the leasing program, whereby there will be greater scrutiny of where companies will be drilling and exploration, an application for the plan must be submitted. They are asking for a specific distance from a water body. He asked the commission to maintain level of integrity of leases. **Moran** also thinks we need more money from the Eagle project in the UP.

**Amy Trotter**, Deputy Director, MUCC spoke to the commission regarding land transactions. **Trotter** noted the land transaction for Minden City State Game Area. She questions the process. She wants to understand how these land transactions are put together. She adds that the process of moving funding source concerns them. They would have liked to see more notice on transactions such as these. They are not opposed to this particular use in this instance. **Creagh** adds that this is taking care of a problem in this historic area. **Creagh** also added that the department will work with US Fish and Wildlife Service approval.

**Dale Hendershot** of Michigan Trapper & Predator Callers, wanted the commission to know that the club would like them to move forward with the use of suppressors for hunting. It is true that the cost is quite expensive, he adds that the fact is the more commonplace this becomes, the

more affordable this will become for the common person. **Hendershot** has shot these firearms, he noted that they don't stop the noise, they muffle it down. He believes this is a good thing to move forward on.

**Chairman Matonich** adjourned the public appearances portion of the meeting at 5:04 p.m. and called order to the regular meeting of the NRC at 5:04 p.m. He noted that all commissioners who were present at the Committee of the Whole were present for the regular meeting.

**Chairman Matonich** added that **Commissioners Schlaybaugh** and **Pontz** were reappointed for another term on the commission.

### REGULAR MEETING OF THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION

#### NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION ACTION ITEMS

##### Approval of Minutes, November 5, 2015 Natural Resources Commission Meeting

**Commissioner Crumbaugh** made a motion that the minutes of the November 5, 2015 NRC meeting be approved. **Commissioner Klarr** supported the motion. Commissioners **Schlaybaugh, Richardson** and **Nichols** were not in attendance for that meeting and abstained from voting. **Matonich** called for discussion, there being none, a vote was taken and the motion carried unanimously.

#### DIRECTOR'S ACTION ITEMS

**Director Creagh** listed the "director's action" items on the agenda and indicated he would approve all items. He did note regarding the Minden City State Game Area land sale that the US Fish and Wildlife Service reviewed and authorized the sale. This sale helps to resolve a minor trespass issue at the Hillside Cemetery. The purchase provides additional public land and helps consolidate current department-managed land within the game area. The strategy also recognizes the importance of culturally significant resources like the Hillside Cemetery. This action helps protect the future of the privately owned cemetery.

#### COMMISSIONER REPORTS

**Commissioner Pontz** made a trip to Uruguay, and she was impressed with all they do with renewable energy. She also observed wildlife; ostrich and capybara. She also added that the Great Lakes Leadership Academy applications are due January 1.

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** had a wonderful deer season in southern Michigan. He added that it was great to see the herd recover after EHD. He attended meeting in Grayling to talk to local folks about state's forest practices and new paper mill going in.

**Commissioner Richardson** thanked the director and chief **O'Neill** for the Governor's Timber Summit that was very well attended. They accomplished many good science-based outcomes.

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**Commissioner Klarr** made a trip to Georgia to shoot quail. She added that she had a quiet deer season in Jackson. She made a trip to Pigeon River where she went grouse hunting and got one, and went fishing the previous evening.

**Commissioner Nichols** went deer hunting with grandkids, and spent time at the Williamstown township hall during opening day for deer check. He was pleased with the response of the hunters and the understanding and response of the staff for thanking the hunters for bringing in their harvest. He noted that many of the successful hunters were women hunters. He added his thanks to UP conservation officer **Mapes** for his assistance to a hunter in the field.

**Chairman Matonich** spent the entire deer season in west UP with no luck. He made a suggestion to marketing committee to promote incentives for wellness; his company will reimburse employees who buy hunting/fishing licenses up to \$25 per license as an incentive for wellness. **Matonich** added that there will be a few committee changes and those will be sent out next week.

#### Next Meeting

**Chairman Matonich** announced that the next meeting of the NRC is scheduled for Thursday, January 14, 2016 at Crystal Mountain, 12500 Crystal Mountain Drive, Thompsonville, MI 49683. He also noted that it would be a joint meeting of the Travel Commission and the NRC beginning at 10:30 a.m. Committees meeting in January will be the NRC Policy Committee on Wildlife and Fisheries and Finance Committee.

#### Adjournment

**Commissioner Schlaybaugh** made a motion to adjourn. **Commissioner Nichols** seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 5:16 p.m.

APPROVED: Date: 1/14/16



John Matonich, NRC Chairman



William E. Moritz, DNR Director